



News in Brief

- The Standards Commission launched its redesigned website on 23 December 2015. We will continue to develop the content, therefore any feedback or comments will be gratefully received.
- The Standards Commission undertook training events on the Councillors' Code of Conduct at West Dunbartonshire Council on 7 October 2015 and at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on 5 November 2015. The training presentations can be found on our website, along with the dates of any forthcoming Hearings and Decisions arising from Hearings, which have already taken place.
- The Standards Commission's office will be closed from Thursday 24 December 2015 until Tuesday 5 January 2016.

Revised Guidance on Councillors' Code of Conduct

The Standards Commission is in the process of revising its Guidance on the Councillors' Code of Conduct. The draft Revised Guidance was published in November and stakeholders were invited to submit comments on its format and contents. The Standards Commission is currently reviewing and revising the draft Revised Guidance in light of the comments received, with a view to issuing and publishing the final version in early 2016. It is anticipated that the Guidance will be published in two formats; one being a document that incorporates the Code of Conduct and the other being a standalone version.

Standards Officers' Workshop & New Guidance for Members of Devolved Public Bodies

The Standards Commission held a workshop for the Standards Officers of Devolved Public Bodies on 3 November 2015. Topics that were discussed included the operation of the Model Code of Conduct and associated Guidance, and practical issues relating to the Ethical Standards Framework arising from the creation of the new Health & Social Care Integrated Joint Boards and following the merger of some Further Education Colleges.

Delegates at the event indicated it would be helpful for the Standards Commission to publish advice on the **Role of the Standards Officer within the Ethical Standards Framework**.

In addition, it was suggested that Members of Devolved Public Bodies may benefit from **Advice on the Use of Social Media** and **Advice on Relationships with Employees**.

The three advice notes mentioned above have been produced and can be found here: www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/education-and-resources/professional-briefings

Health & Social Care Integration Joint Boards

The Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 (Register of Interests) Regulations 2003 provides that where a body has no employees, the Standards Officer appointed requires to be approved by the Standards Commission. For further information on how to seek approval and the information you will be required to provide, please see the Standards Commission's website at: www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/about-us/news or telephone us on 0131 348 6666.

CASES

Overview

Since the last briefing in September 2015, three cases have been referred to the Standards Commission by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. The Standards Commission held one Hearing in respect of one case concerning one councillor.

Outcome of Hearing

The Standards Commission determined that there had been a breach of the Councillors' Code of Conduct by the councillor involved. The Standards Commission suspended the councillor from all meetings of the Council and any Committees or sub committees thereof on which he is a representative for a period of three months.

Learning Outcomes from Cases

1. Councillors are required to update their entries in the Register of Interests within one month of their circumstances changing. This includes registering the receipt of gifts and hospitality. While the Guidance to Local Authorities for Councils states that Councils should issue a reminder every six months, it is nevertheless a councillor's personal responsibility to ensure their entry is updated within one month of a new interest arising or their circumstances changing.
2. The registration of interests (including remuneration and non-financial interests) is a fundamental requirement of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. A failure to register such interests removes the opportunity for openness and transparency in a councillor's role and denies any member of the public the opportunity to consider whether a councillor's interests may or may not influence the decision-making process.
3. Councillors should accept any training being offered on the Code of Conduct, even if they are experienced members, in order to ensure their understanding of its provisions and requirements is correct.

Details

Details of the outcome of cases and about scheduled Hearings can be found at:

www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/cases/case-list



INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC LIFE

For further information on the support we can offer councillors and members of devolved public bodies, please either speak to your Monitoring Officer or Standards Officer or look out for new information on our website.

Alternatively, please contact us at:

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